

## Volunteer Programs



Photo: Evelyn Ganson

Stellwagen Sanctuary Seabird Stewards collect data on the R/V *Auk*, and on whale watching boats off Boston.



Photo: NOAA

The Team OCEAN volunteer program puts trained, knowledgeable naturalists out on the water in kayaks in Monterey Bay to greet and interact with fellow day kayakers.



Photo: Beach Watch, Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary

Beach Watch volunteers survey their assigned beach while participating in a long-term shoreline monitoring program founded by Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary off San Francisco.

# NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Volunteer Programs

## Background

Volunteers help to ensure national marine sanctuaries remain America's underwater treasures for future generations. These volunteers participate in a wide variety of activities including diving, whale identification, beach cleanups, water quality monitoring, collecting field observations and surveys, acting as visitor center docents, and wildlife monitoring. National marine sanctuary volunteers work in close collaboration with many other groups in their local communities including non-profits, boat operators, academic institutions, federal agencies, tribal agencies, researchers and many more.

## Program History

The NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries volunteer program began in the mid-1990s with the development of Beach Watch and Team OCEAN at Gulf of the Farallones and Florida Keys national marine sanctuaries, respectively. Today, volunteers are an integral part of many sanctuary programs, contributing invaluable

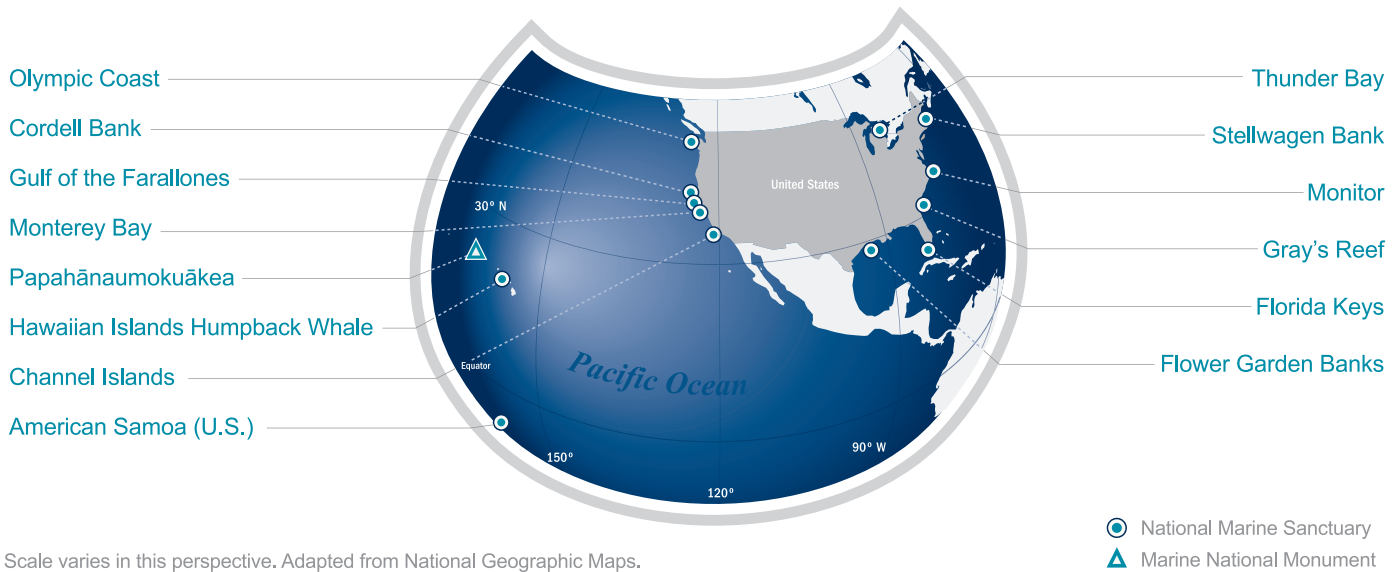
time and energy across the sanctuary system. The diverse skills, knowledge and support they provide help expand the reach of the national marine sanctuaries and build on the work of sanctuary staff.

## Strength in Numbers

Sanctuary volunteers are a vital and powerful force contributing significantly to the success of the sanctuary system.

- In 2014, national marine sanctuary volunteers contributed over 140,000 hours across the system, which is equivalent to 70 full-time federal employees.
- Sanctuary volunteers contributed \$3.15M to the sanctuary system last year (calculated using the non-profit organization Independent Sector's 2014 estimated value of volunteer time of \$23.07 per hour).
- In 2014, 5,886 of these volunteers specifically supported citizen science efforts helping to answer real-world scientific questions with a total of 63,084 hours.

# NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



## National Recognition

Since 2003, the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and National Marine Sanctuary Foundation have recognized the important work of volunteers around the country and annually named one as Volunteer of the Year.

## Take Pride in America Awards

Take Pride in America is a nationwide partnership program authorized by Congress to promote appreciation and stewardship of public lands.

In 2011, the Channel Islands Naturalist Corps received the Take Pride in America Outstanding Federal Volunteer Program Award. This joint effort by Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and Channel Islands National Park, was recognized for coordinating more than 140 volunteers who are specially-trained to educate visitors. Each year these naturalists reach more than 500,000 people attending whale-watch tours, island hikes and community events.

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary's Ocean Count project was named Take Pride in America Outstanding Federal Volunteer Program for 2012. The project has grown from 150 volunteers in 1996 to more than 2,300 volunteers in 2014. Volunteers count whales and record their behavior from more than 60 locations across the islands of O'ahu, Kaua'i and Hawai'i. Over the past 17 years, more than 20,000 volunteers have contributed 100,000 hours of time

## The Future of Volunteers

Volunteer programs continue to grow around the sanctuary system, and the total number of hours contributed rise every year. The NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries continues to expand and improve the volunteer program through increased awareness and better collaboration between sanctuary sites and with other federal and state partners.



Photo: Karlyn Langjahr, NOAA Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary

Since 2000, more than 10,700 CoastSaver volunteers have collected over 320 tons of marine debris in the Olympic Peninsula.